

# CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, and Jeff Merkley

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## Baseball Bats Made from Ash May Fall Victim to Climate Change



For more than a century, Major League Baseball (MLB) has relied heavily on bats from the wood of the white ash tree. Half of MLB players use a Louisville Slugger bat, according to the company. White ash makes up 45 percent of Louisville Slugger's wood bats, and all of its white ash comes from forests in northern Pennsylvania and New York. But scientists say climate change may be altering the spread of the emerald ash borer, a tiny beetle that threatens white ash forests. Very cold days—specifically those lower than 30°F—can kill emerald ash borer larvae that overwinter in tree bark. The Northeast had about 30 percent fewer extreme-cold days over the past 30 years compared to the century before, according to NOAA. Hillerich & Bradsby Co. has been making Louisville Slugger bats for more than a hundred years. “We haven’t seen [the beetle] affect our ability to get logs yet, but it’s knocking on the doorstep,” said general manager Brian Boltz. “It’s pretty established both 50 miles north and south of our main harvesting areas.” Within the past couple of decades, the company has started diversifying with yellow birch and maple. But many of MLB’s stars remain “ash guys,” Boltz said. (*Scientific American*)

## Shell, Unilever Seek 1 Trillion-Ton Limit on CO<sub>2</sub> Output

Royal Dutch Shell and Unilever joined 68 other companies in urging governments to cap cumulative carbon emissions since the industrial revolution to 1 trillion metric tons to contain rising temperatures. According to The Prince of Wales’s Corporate Leaders Group—which organized the so-called Trillion Tonne Communiqué—the emissions cap is needed to stabilize the increase in temperatures since the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 2°C (3.6°F). That’s the level beyond which scientists say the rising seas, more intense storms, and melting glaciers caused by global warming may become dangerous. The companies also urged governments to transform the current energy system and create a plan for what to do with fossil fuels, including examining carbon capture and storage. Governments from 194 nations are working to devise an emissions-limiting treaty by the end of 2015 that will keep a 2°C lid on temperature rises. They’ll be guided by the UN’s most comprehensive report yet on climate change, which said the world has already emitted more than half the carbon compatible with the 2°C target. (*Bloomberg*)

## New Showtime Series Examines Effects of Climate Change

On April 13, Showtime will begin airing its new series, “Years of Living Dangerously”, in which a cadre of stars will highlight the human effects of climate change. The show, produced by James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger among others, is a collection of reports from around the world by well-known personalities including Harrison Ford, Don Cheadle, and Matt Damon. Producer David Gelber said he and his partner Joel Bach came up with the idea while working as producers at “60 Minutes.” They believed climate change was the most important story of this generation, but was not getting much attention from the media. “We spent a full year researching potential stories talking with leading scientists and developing leads and sources,” Gelber said. Joe Romm, a chief science advisor for the project, said the IPCC report released March 31 “lay to rest the question of whether climate change is affecting us now.” “It says it is affecting us on every continent, and we don’t appear to be ready for it,” Romm said. “These stories—this is what climate change looks like.” Among the stories covered by the series are deforestation in Indonesia, a year-round fire season in the western United States, the Texas drought, and Superstorm Sandy. (*The Sun Herald*)

## Young U.S. Evangelicals Pray for Action on Climate Change

Last week, young evangelicals gathered at more than 20 Christian college campuses for a “Day of Prayer and Action” on climate change. The event was part of a weeklong initiative at Christian colleges and evangelical institutions across the country. “Young evangelicals and professors came together to learn what climate impacts are, what climate destruction is doing around the world, and to pray that our church and political leaders will take more action,” said Ben Lowe of Young Evangelicals for Climate Action. In 2013, the Christian social justice organization Sojourners commissioned a study on the evangelical community’s attitudes on climate change. Sixty percent of evangelicals surveyed believe climate change is happening and human activity plays a role. The study found young evangelicals to be more responsive to climate change messages than young non-evangelicals. “As young evangelicals, we’re really concerned about the world we’re inheriting and those being impacted—the poor and those who are vulnerable, living on the margins and bearing the brunt of the climate impact,” Lowe said. (*ClimateWire*)

*Sheldon Whitehouse*